

# The Arts Council of Greater New Haven

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## Testimony for Committee on Government Administration and Elections

March 7, 2011

Re: Bill 148

My name is Cynthia Clair. I am Executive Director of the Arts Council of Greater New Haven and President of the Connecticut Arts Alliance, a statewide arts advocacy organization.

I urge you to **OPPOSE proposed Bill 148** which calls for an end of Connecticut's percent for art program.

Connecticut's Art in Public Spaces program was established by the General Assembly in 1978. The Art in Public Spaces program requires that not less than 1% of the cost of construction or renovation of publicly accessible state buildings be allocated for the commission or purchase of artwork for that building. Over 300 works have been commissioned since the program's inception. The works represent a wide variety of media, including sculpture, wall relief, environmental installation, painting, and photography; and range in scale from works on paper to monumental murals.

The purpose of the Art in Public Spaces program is to provide the citizens of Connecticut with an improved public environment by investing in creative works of high quality for public buildings. The program adds visibility to the cultural heritage of the state and its people. **To date, the Connecticut program has resulted in 318 projects created by 199 artists in 61 towns.**

Why public art? Public art makes sense of communities by creating landmarks and defining neighborhoods and districts. Public art transforms a government building into a source of pride for a community. Public art's "placemaking" builds livable communities and contributes to the distinctiveness of a place.

**The Art in Public Spaces program has employed 90 Connecticut artists.** In addition to employing artists, the commissioned artist frequently contract additional employees hiring fabricators, studio assistants, structural engineers, electricians, architects, installers etc. Artists who receive commissions purchase project materials from Connecticut businesses. They buy paint, granite, glass, stone, steel, light fixtures and more.

I realize that the economy and jobs are top priorities. The state's public art program is good for the economy, generating employment and commerce. It represents a tiny fraction of the state budget, for a return that is long lasting. This expenditure enhances public buildings from police stations and courthouses to community colleges. Unlike most government expenses, this program creates **permanent** art work to be enjoyed by generations of Connecticut citizens. Please preserve Connecticut's cultural heritage.